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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of the high school as a political environment in which students may acquire experiences which contribute to the development of their political competence. The paper explains the objectives of the study, discusses the methods used, describes the schools in which data were gathered, reports the findings, and identifies areas for future study. Specifically examined is the relationship of political attitudes to participation in school groups and to the types of participation students engage in within groups. Also examined are differences in the political characteristics among groups that may have an impact on the experiences students have within groups and on the skills they develop. And finally, since both school size and social/economic status (SES) have been linked with attitudes and participation, the effect of these variables is explored. Thirteen secondary schools in urban, suburban, and rural settings were selected for primary data collection on the basis of convenience and accessibility. Questionnaires were developed and administered to random samples within each school to assess student attitudes, school system political characteristics, and within-school group political characteristics. Data for the study were collected in 1974, and again in 1975 and 1976 from the same schools and students. Findings show that student political attitudes are associated with both quantity and quality of participation. The study also found a lack of relationship between school SES and level of participation within the school. (RM)

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Relationships of Student Political Attitudes and Group Characteristics to the Roles Students Choose to Play in School Groups

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines the role of the high school as a political environment in which students may acquire experiences which contribute to the development of their political competence. The whole school is not considered an 'agent' of political socialization, but is conceived of as a political system, a collection of settings which students seek out as testing grounds for their social and political roles. The competence building experiences students have will be shaped by their own predispositions towards participation and by the characteristics of the groups they happen to participate in.

Using longitudinal data gathered in 1974, 1975 and 1976, the study explores the political attitudes students bring with them to high school and how these attitudes shape their tendency to participate or not in high school activities, to seek out politically relevant groups, and to choose particular roles and levels of activity within these groups. Also described are some of the differences in political characteristics among groups which may be expected to shape the opportunities students have to increase their political skill and understanding. Finally, an attempt to assess the impact of school size and SES composition of the school on attitudes and participation is made.

POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND THE CYCLE OF POLITICAL COMPETENCE

The place of the high school in the political socialization process has been in doubt. Political attitudes such as political interest, confidence (efficacy), trust and integration have long been considered important outcomes of the policication socialization process; they have been linked with adult political behavior. (Lane, 1959; Milbrath and Goel, 1977) But these attitudes are not thought to undergo major change during high school. Studies have shown

that many basic political attitudes approach adult levels by 8th grade and are relatively stable after that. (Hess and Torney, 1967) High school instruction does not appear to have much impact on these attitudes. (Langton and Jennings, 1968; Ehman, 1980a) Even participation experiences specifically designed to involve high school students in political action have had limited effect on such attitudes as political efficacy. (Jones, 1974) Earlier analysis of the longitudinal attitude data used in this study was consistent with these findings; general and school political attitudes are remarkably stable across the three years of high school. (Ehman, 1980b)

It would appear that development of positive political attitudes is not the political socialization task for the high school years. These attitudes may, however, be an important element in the continuing socialization process. It is useful to apply M. Brewster Smith's model of personal competence to political competence and to think of it as a two-stage process. There is a basic core of attitudes such as trust, confidence, integration and interest, and a behavioral component of "habits, skills and abilities that are required to translate hopeful expectations and active orientations into effective behaviors." (Smith, 1969)

For Smith, growth of competence is a cyclic process. The individual with positive predispositions will seek out experiences that enhance the development of skill and understanding; this behavioral competence will in turn increase or maintain the positive attitudinal predispositions that launched the activity in the first place. A person without positive predispositions will be less likely to have the experiences which would increase skill and perhaps enhance the sense of self-confidence and interest that predispose to action. (Smith, 1969)

Students are faced in high school with a wide array of group settings in which to acquire and enhance the "habits, skills and abilities" that translate

positive predispositions into effective behavior. Entry into these groups is voluntary, and the level of activity and the type of participant role the student chooses to play are also voluntary. Students may be nominal members or participate more actively--planning and directing group activity, articulating points of view, evaluating alternatives, involving others in groups work and performing other such tasks that contribute to their skill and to their understanding of how groups work.

Groups may also differ substantially in their political characteristics. Certainly groups associated with the governance process such as student councils, executive advisory groups and the like will offer more opportunities for the practice of decision-making skills than other school groups and they may attract students with more positive political predispositions. Other group characteristics, such as the concentration of leadership, the degree to which most members actively participate, and the decision rule used within the group, will also affect the experience the participant is likely to have and shape the skill and understanding that results from this experience.

There is some fragmentary evidence in the political socialization literature to suggest that group participation in high school has a positive impact on political skillfulness (Barker and Gump, 1964; McPartland, 1971) or on further community activity (Marks, 1958; Bennett, 1956), but this remains a largely unstudied area.

Because the high school political arena is made up of a collection of voluntary associations, the possibility for any individual student to enhance the level of political skill and understanding through activity, depends on that student's willingness to enter into group settings. If Smith's notion is correct, then it is those students who enter high school with the basic core of positive predispositions that make up the first stage of competence who are

more likely to seek out these competence building experiences. If political attitudes developed prior to high school affect the participation experiences selected by students then educators cannot rely solely on the extracurricular program to achieve effective political education. Without systematic attempts to develop these skills in all students, one can expect the relatively politically competent to become more so and the less competent to be left behind. The issues addressed in this study thus have important implications for social studies educators.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE STUDY

In this study, we will examine the relationship of political attitudes--measured with both the general society and the school as referent--to the fact of participation in school groups and to the types of participation students engage in within groups. Also examined are differences in the political characteristics among groups, differences that may be expected to have an impact on the experiences students have within groups and on the skills they develop. Although the focus of the study is on the relationship between attitudes and behavior, we also examine some limited evidence that suggests a link between participation and political awareness and understanding. Finally, since both school size and SES have been linked with attitudes and participation, we will explore the effect of these variables in our sample.

We expect the following results:

1. Political attitudes will be related to the decision to participate in school groups; this relationship will be stronger for school attitudes than for general attitudes. This relationship is expected to hold for each of the three years in which data were collected (1974, 1975 and 1976), and earlier attitudes are expected to be associated with participation

in subsequent years. These attitudes will be associated with the number of groups students participate in as well as with the simple fact of participation.

2. The socio-political attitudes will be more closely related to the decision to participate in governance groups such as student councils than to other group participation. Political attitudes of interest and confidence will be particularly strong predictors of governance group participation.

3. The socio-political attitudes will also be related to the types of participation students seek out within the activity groups. Attitudes will predict intensity of participation; this should be particularly true of the political attitudes of interest and confidence within the more overtly political school governance groups. Attitudes may also be related to the particular kinds of roles that students choose to play within groups. Attitudes will also be related to student schoolwide and group office holding. Again the political attitudes of interest and confidence should be the best predictors of these leadership roles.

4. Groups are also expected to differ in such political characteristics as concentration of leadership, degree of widespread participation, and type of decision rule.

5. Students who participate will differ from non-participants in their awareness of the school political process; their perceptions of how the process works; and in their sense of how the process should optimally work. This suggests a possible impact of participation on political understanding.

6. The impact of the SES of the school (lower to lower middle vs upper middle to upper) on student participation will also be examined. We would expect a lower degree of participation in lower SES schools resulting from less positive predispositions to participate as measured by the socio-political attitudes. We would not, however, expect SES of the school to affect the link between attitudes and participation. This is consistent with findings in political socialization research that show political attitudes to have an effect independent of social class, although they are themselves affected by SES. (Milbrath and Goel, 1977)

7. School size is expected to influence level of participation in school groups. Size should not have an impact on the relationship between attitudes and participation within the school.

In the following sections of the paper, the methods used in the study will be discussed; the schools in which the data were gathered will be described; findings will be reported; and implications for further research and practice identified.

METHODS OF THE STUDY

In this section, procedures used in the study will be explained. School selection, questionnaire development, and data collection procedures are included.

School Selection

Thirteen secondary schools were selected for primary data collection in the Spring of 1974. In addition, two secondary schools not in the primary data collection group were selected for pilot testing of instruments. Selection of all schools was made on the basis of convenience and accessibility, plus their place within a framework of desired characteristics outlined below. Each school had to be close enough to the researcher's base for reasonable travel times. An attempt was made to select groups of schools within relatively close proximity of one another to make travel most efficient.

Access was a prime consideration in selecting schools. In each case, following an initial mail contact, the school principal was asked whether he or she would be willing to support our research efforts by participating in the study.

After a group of accessible schools had been identified, a brief questionnaire, filled out by the principal, was analyzed for preliminary information about the size, general social status, and internal organizational characteristics of the school. A grid of school characteristics was then constructed for selecting schools across a range of size, urban-rural, and organizational school types. Information on the latter characteristic was tentative, but the intent was to obtain as much variation as possible in the schools we selected.

After the preliminary selection process was complete, mail, telephone, and personal inquiries were made about the school's participation in the study. Those schools declining participation after personal contact were replaced by schools with similar characteristics. Finally, thirteen schools were selected in this manner. Descriptions of the schools are found below.

Questionnaire and Observation Instrument Development

Questionnaires were developed to assess student attitudes, school system political characteristics, and within-school group political characteristics. These three questionnaires were drafted and pilot tested during January, 1974, in the two pilot test schools. One was a small rural school of 335 students, the other a large school of 2,000 students in a community of 50,000. Approximately 250 questionnaires of each type were administered to a random sample of students.

Based on analysis of marginal response distributions for all questions, and factor analysis of the original 132 attitude items, the questionnaires were revised. These revised instruments were used in the 1974 data collection. Some items were trimmed out of the original 1974 instruments for use in the 1975 and 1976 followup data collections.

Selected school political characteristics from the system level questionnaire were used in this analysis. They are described in the findings section where appropriate.

Measurement of Socio-Political Attitudes

Of particular interest in this study are the socio-political attitudes of the high school students. Four basic attitudes, which commonly appear as dependent variables in political socialization research, were included in this research; social trust, social integration, political interest and political

confidence. Each attitude was measured with regard to two referents--the society in general and the students' own school. For political confidence, for example, there is a separate measure for political confidence with respect to school political arena. In the case of trust, there are three separate attitude measures: trust in people generally, trust in school adults, and trust in other students.

Trust refers to the belief that human behavior is consistent and governed by positive motivations such as principles like justice. Jennings and Niemi (1968), in summarizing cross-sectional school research, suggest that children's trust of national political figures and processes is high in the elementary school years, but this trust erodes during junior and senior high school, and is replaced by increasing cynicism in adult years. Ehman (1970) confirmed the high school trust erosion phenomenon with longitudinal data.

Each attitude item was followed by a 5-point scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Three of the items used to measure trust in this study are:

(1) What people tell me and what they actually do are two completely different things.

(2) Students in my school usually keep the promises they make to others.

(3) Most teachers don't care about what happens to kids.

Integration refers to the belief that one is connected to one's social environment, and not cut off or alienated from it. Little research on students' sense of integration in secondary schools has been conducted, despite the extensive and popular educational writing about alienation of school youth. Ziblatt (1965) found that participation in high school activities was associated with feelings of integration in the high school status system.

Example items used to measure integration are:

(1) What I do doesn't matter to anyone but me.

(2) There are a lot of people in this school who I care about.

Political confidence is defined as the belief that one's actions can have an effect on political activities and decisions. It is analogous to, but more general than, the concept political efficacy. Almond and Verba (1963) found in a cross-cultural study that student verbal participation in school classes (and other social settings) was associated with adult feelings of competence to understand and act in the political arena. Easton and Dennis (1968) summarized the research relating to political efficacy, and found early development of this attitude in pre-high school students, as early as the third grade. They suggest that this might offset the growth, during adulthood, of frustration, disillusionment, and rising cynicism with participation in a modern mass political system. Stentz and Lambert (1977) take issue with the validity and reliability of the scales used in these studies to measure political efficacy, and develop a new measure which is similar to that used in the present study.

Two items to measure political confidence are:

(1) People like me can influence political decisions.

(2) If I disagree with a school rule, I am able to do something to help change it.

Political interest refers to the set of beliefs that predispose one to respond positively toward political situations. An attitude of interest toward political activity and situations is a logical base on which individual political behavior must rest and is another important school-related dimension for study.

Two of the items used to measure this attitude are:

(1) I am usually interested in political matters.

(2) I would like to figure out how decisions are made in our school.

The attitude scales were composed of a total of 64 items which were the result of two field tests, beginning with 132 items. There was an equal number of positively and negatively worded items on each scale. The final items were factor analyzed, using an oblique rotation, and the resulting factor structure lent strength to the construct validity of the attitudes discussed above (Ehman & Gillespie, 1975). Cronbach alpha coefficients for the nine scales for the three questionnaire occasions range from .60 to .88, with only two instances below .70.

Another kind of evidence for the construct validity of the attitudes comes from a comparison of the factor structures for the attitudes across the three data collection periods. Although space precludes a complete presentation of the data, it was found that the stability of the attitude structure for the students having complete questionnaires for all 3 years was remarkably high. A factor comparison yielded cosines--interpretable as correlation coefficients of the fit between factor structures across time--of above .95 in all cases. Thus, the attitude structure, or the relationship of the attitudes to one another, is quite permanent by the high school age. This does not mean that an individual's actual attitudes do not change over time, but it does mean that we are dealing with a coherent, and stable, set of attributes.

An examination of the stability of the individual attitude scores, rather than the structure of the set of attitudes, confirms the picture already drawn. Correlations for 1 year to the next are high and consistent, and the 2-year correlations are slightly lower in most cases. These correlations for the nine attitudes range from .39 to .70, with a mean correlation of .55.

The attitude measures used in this paper, except where otherwise noted, are factor scores which take the form of z-scores, with 1975 means of 0.0 and a 1.0 SD for each attitude.

Data Collection

Data for the study were collected during the Spring of 1974, and again in 1975 and 1976 from the same schools and students. Thirteen schools participated in the study the first year. Three schools declined to participate during 1975 and 1976. Two urban schools were of medium size (1000-2000) and had racially integrated student populations. Four schools were suburban, large (2000 or over), and had predominantly (95 percent) white students. One urban school was large and had predominantly black students. One school was small, suburban, and had predominantly white students, and two schools were small, rural, and had predominantly white students.

Approximately 200 students from each school were randomly sampled either through name lists for each grade, or through required classes at each grade level. Questionnaires were administered either to the entire 200 students in an auditorium or in individual classrooms. The sample mortality for students was 39 percent from 1974 to 1975, and 68 percent from 1974 to 1976. School dropouts, residential mobility, school absence, and refusal to respond to the 1975 and 1976 questionnaires appear to be major factors in explaining this mortality. The precise distribution of these factors among students across the 10 schools is not known, but dropouts and mobility from the school districts appeared to account for about 31 percent of the mortality. Absences and early graduation appeared to account for another 15 percent. The final number for which complete data over the three questionnaire administrations was available was 339 out of the 1,061 total students in 1974 who could possibly have responded in 1976.

The school system characteristics questionnaire contained the following question:

> Most activities in schools are carried out in groups. For example, clubs, councils, committees, and even academic classes meet and make plans and decisions. Meetings such as these may be conducted by students, teachers or administrators. Please list up to five groups which you think are most actively involved in planning and making important decisions in your school. Please list the complete name of the group, or at least clearly describe it.

Responses to this question were tabulated for each school, and the results formed the basis for deciding which groups within each school to study as "behavior settings." Two or three groups in each school were selected for observation. In each group, one or two meetings were observed to code decision-making and role behavior of individuals. The members of each group were also asked to respond to the behavior setting questionnaire, which asked for group political characteristics as well as role nominations of others in the group. Thirty-four groups were surveyed by use of the behavior setting questionnaire. Selected political characteristics of groups have been used in this analysis, and will be described when findings are presented. Not all 34 groups were observed for role behavior because of time constraints on the research team.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOLS AND STUDENT GROUPS

School Descriptions

In this section of the paper, a brief description of each of the thirteen schools is presented. In addition to a few comments about size, student ethnic group and social status composition, and geographic character, the school and the student groups will be described in political terms, so that the kinds of salient issues, governance patterns, and influence styles are characterized.

School UH. This is a small laboratory school for a midwest state teacher's college. It has grades 9-12, and about 460 students, of whom about 5% are from racial minorities. Students are admitted to the school from a cross-section of the community of about 100,000, and surrounding rural areas. The students are typically from professional, middle class homes, although there is a wide range of social status represented in the school.

The school system questionnaire which each student responded to contained the following question:

> Think of your school as a whole. Sometimes decisions are made which affect almost everyone in the school. For example, dress codes, smoking policies, or decisions about new courses affect many students, teachers and administrators in a school. In the following spaces, please list three school-wide decisions which have recently been or are now being made in your school.

In School UH, decisions most often mentioned had to do with administrative policies, curriculum, and examinations. An optional final examination policy, up to the discretion of the teacher, and a pass-fail grading option for juniors and seniors in two of their courses, were two principally-mentioned decisions in this category. These comprised almost 40% of all decisions mentioned by

the 193 students in the sample at UH. This is a fair indication of the academic orientation of this small, rather elite, laboratory school. However, the students also named an open-campus lunch and free period policy, and a no smoking policy, as important issues.

The student senate at UH is most often named as an influential group. This group had more power than did the student councils in any of the other 12 schools in the study. The senate was asked to participate in many important decisions, including the offering of new courses, as well as those listed above. The senate could initiate any new policy; although the principal had veto power over their decisions, he reported that he had never exercised that power.

Other student groups studied at UH were the speech club, the school paper, and the American Field Services Club, which participated in foreign student exchanges. Of these three, the school paper was engaged in political issues, especially in commentary and an analysis of several of the current and controversial school issues.

School A. This school is in a middle-to upper middle class suburb of an eastern industrial city of more than 100,000. It is probably the most affluent of all of the schools in the study. There are 1,100 students in grades 10-12 with virtually no racial minority representation. Over 60 percent of the graduates continue their education in four year colleges and universities.

Compared with School UH, School A students found non-academic decisions and issues to be most salient. Most often mentioned recent decisions involved school rules, such as stricter enforcement of hall passes and no smoking enforcement, and student privileges, ranging from open study halls for freshmen to open campus for seniors. Almost no academic issues were cited as important.

Three school groups, all representing politically active students, were studied in School A. The student executive group was the analogy to student councils in other schools, or the student senate in School UH. The executive group is composed of nine students elected from each of nine "houses" within the school--three houses for each of the three grade levels in the school. The political science club, with more than 50 members, was sponsored by a very enthusiastic and capable government teacher. There was also a student teacher committee to advise the principal.

School G. School G is in a working class to upper middle class suburb of a midwestern industrial city of more than 100,000. There are 1,645 students in grades 9-12 and less than 2% minority students; a very crowded building requires a split class schedule, with one-half of the students beginning school at 7:30 a.m., and the other half at 10:30 a.m.

As in School A, students were most concerned with school rules as issues affecting them. A smoking area in school had recently been revoked by the administration, and this issue dominated student concern. A recent dress code was also mentioned often by the students. Even though the school was dramatically overcrowded, and the last of a long series of local bond issues had failed recently, the students rarely cited this as an important issue.

The school had two student governance groups; a student council, and a smaller student government committee, advisory to the principal. The Spanish Club was often singled out by School G students as being very active and important in school affairs, with frequent fund-raising and social events. But of all of the school groups, the P.I.G. group was the most interesting and unique. P.I.G. stood for "Pride in G-------." The principal explained that the group had started from a student initiative to clean up the rather old and ill-maintained school building. The members campaigned and tried to use

personal and peer influence to make the school more attractive. Of all the groups studied in the 13 high schools, the P.I.G. represented a "grass roots" movement which was used to mobilize political support for a specific social goal in school. It certainly had its counterparts in the wider political sphere of environmental politics. At the time of our 1974 data gathering, the group represented the most prominent school activity. It was not evident during the 1975 and 1976 visits, however.

School L. This school has grades 10-12 and 1,740 students. It is the single public secondary school for a midwestern community of about 30,000, and is set in rural surroundings. The students are from a broad range of social status homes, with about 800 riding to school in buses from outside of town. Almost none are minority students.

School L students named relatively fewer school decisions that were important than in most other schools. The two that stood out were equal in frequency. The first was typical--a no-smoking policy. But the second was curricular, and involved the recent decision to establish a phase-elective English system. In this regard, then, School L is similar to School UH in its relative concern with academic issues, as compared to school rules and student privileges.

Only two school groups were studied at School L; the large student council with 32 members, and the Girl Reserves, a socially-oriented school service group.

School U. This school has 1,600 students in grades 10-12, and is one of five in a midwestern industrial city of over 200,000. A wide range of ethnic minorities is represented, including students of Afro-American and Polish-American descent. City-wide integration has been achieved without court order. Students are typically from working class homes.

Over 60 percent of the decisions named important by the students had to do with the sudden imposition of a wide range of rather strict rules and withdrawal of student privileges. These included strict enforcement of the smoking ban, hall passes, ban on congregating in halls and parking lots, loss of the student lounge, and use of security guards. These measures had resulted in a major fight with heavy racial conflict present. Even with the overriding importance of this event, and the rules changes which ensued, a number of students also cited two curriculum-related decisions, one of which involved a change to a quarter grading system, and the other of which allowed students to choose teachers and classes for the following year.

The student council was actually a student government class which students attended for credit. With nearly 40 members, it was most often listed as an important school group. However, the letterman club was seen as nearly as influential. This is probably due to the extensive money-raising activities of this group, and their high involvement in the social fabric of the school. As one might have guessed, heavy emphasis on sports is present at School U.

School UA. This is an affluent suburban school in a large (over 200,000) midwestern city. With grades 10-12, the 2,000 students include very few minority representatives, and come from mostly middle-and upper-middle class homes.

Despite the fact that this is the highest social status school in the sample, few academic or curriculum decisions were listed as important. Rather, students listed student privileges as by far the most salient issues, followed by stricter hall pass system and a crackdown on smoking. School groups identified as influential were the student council and the leaders club.

School O. This is in the same city as School U, and has a similar racial, ethnic, and social status mix, although the proportion of Afro-American students is somewhat higher (about 35%). There are 2,500 students in grades 9-12.

However, there are two separate "houses" within the school, with separate faculties, space, and programs. Only the budget and varsity sports are shared by both houses. The study included only one of the two houses.

School O students cited virtually no academic oriented decisions, but focused on rule enforcement. New administrative policies in the areas of class cutting, where parents were called personally in each instance, tardiness, smoking, and hall passes were all listed relatively often. One could sense the restrictiveness in School O's environment, as after each passing bell the doors between floors were locked and guarded throughout the day, and visitors were escorted at all times. Only the student council was studied at School O.

School N. This school is in an affluent suburb of a very large (1,000,000+) eastern industrial city. There are 1,500 students in grades 11-12. They are predominately from middle-to upper-middle class homes, and there are almost no minority students in the school.

This was a one-issue student body, and the issue was smoking. Much confusion existed about the decision whether to allow smoking in a designated area. Two previous policies had established opposing answers to that question, and the state department of public instruction had recently ruled that smoking should not be allowed in school buildings. The students, who at the time of the study had a designated area, were very upset and consumed by this one decision. Of all the schools studied, School N was the most dominated by a single issue.

The only student group studied at School N was the small student executive group, which consisted of class officers plus a few other elected representatives from other groups. The group met with and advised the principal and superintendent, both of whom seemed to pay attention to their concerns and opinions.

School B. This is another school in a different suburb of the same city as School N. It is a smaller school, with 900 students in grades 10-12, and working class and lower middle class homes are typically represented. There are few minority students in the school.

Three decisions dominated the decisions named by School B students. There had been a recent policy instituted to allow open campus privileges, so that students could arrive late or depart early if they had openings in their schedules. A curriculum issue, having to do with mini-classes in history was also cited, as was a sports-related decision, which was to change the traditional football dance name and theme to include all sports.

The two groups studied at School B both had to do with school governance--the student council, with 21 members, and the much smaller student-administrative committee, which included only six members--the class presidents and the principal and his assistant. It was the impression from observation that the latter group had considerably more influence in school affairs than the student council.

School H. This is a small rural school in the midwest. There are about 540 students in grades 7-12; many are from farm families bussed in from the surrounding area. The school population is very homogeneous--no minorities are included.

The student council at School H was invested with considerable power by the principal. The students cited the dress code decisions, made recently by the student council, as by far the most important in the school. The council had recommended, and the principal had approved, the relaxation of the dress code and the ban on long hair. The secord most often mentioned school decision was a crackdown in enforcement of the ban on smoking.

The only other school group rated as very influential was the Future Homemakers of America, which was in the center of the school's social and service life. It obviously reflected the small town school setting. Even though the student council and F.H.A. were named as most influential, there was heavy participation in a variety of other school groups. This participation was strongly encouraged by the principal and teachers.

School C. This is another small rural school from the same general area as School H. There are 740 students in grades 7-12, but only 325 in grades 9-12. The students comprise a less homogeneous group, as the town is used increasingly as a bedroom community for a very large city about 20 miles away. A range of social status families are represented, although they are still typically small town/rural. Few minority students attend the school.

School C issues were also influenced by the strong student council. The dress code and hair length relaxation had been established a couple of years before the study, with the student council initiative having been crucial. The students in the survey clearly remembered and appreciated this intervention by a student group. Interestingly, the student council had more recently initiated a class on drugs. Another curriculum decision had to do with the institution of a new special literature class, although the student council was not involved. Other decisions had to do with out of school conduct during school hours, public displays of affection, and the smoking ban.

As in School H, there were a range of school groups that were important to School C students. The Spanish and French Clubs had memberships of 45 and 40, respectively, and the letterman club had 90 members! The national honor society was also seen as an important group. Given the small size of School C, it is obvious that group membership and participation was at an unusually high level.

School M. This is another school in the same city as school UA. It is a predominately Afro-American and working class family school, with very few white students--perhaps 2 or 3 percent of the total population. There are about 2,200 students in grades 10-12. In terms of school resources, it is probably the least affluent school in the study.

School M was dominated by school rule issues, although like Schools U and O, relatively few total decisions were listed. The no smoking rule was most often mentioned, with school entrance/exit restrictions next most frequently cited. (All outside doors were locked and chained except for the guarded front entrance. This was done to prevent access by undesired non-school persons.)

School M had a student council and student executive group which were named by many students as influential. However, the national honor society actually turned out to be more a student leadership group than these other two. The principal had decided that he wanted the academically able to provide school leadership, and leaned heavily on the national honor society. It was as much or more a school governance group as it was an honorary. It might also be pointed out that School M was a sports power in its state in several sports. For two of the three years during the study the school's male basketball team participated in the state championships.

School GC. This is in a small city (about 30,000) near the large city in which Schools M and UA are situated. There are about 2,400 students in grades 9-12; most are from lower-middle class and middle class homes. Few minority students attend the school.

School GC students were most concerned with the very familiar smoking issue, in which they wanted a designated smoking area. The rest of the main decisions mentioned centered around the school cafeteria. A juke box had been removed by the principal as a punishment for general messiness in the cafeteria, and the student council was attempting to get it back. The students were also dissatisfied with the quality of food, and wanted an open lunch policy which would allow them off campus if they wanted to eat elsewhere.

Of course, the student council was seen as influential in School GC, along with the smaller student executive group, which was advisory to the principal, and the Future Farmers of America, reflecting the rural setting of the school.

Comments on School Descriptions

Two observations seem to emerge from a look across all thirteen school descriptions above. Perhaps most striking are the differences between small and large schools. Schools C, H and UH had fewer than 500 students, and all were characterized by relatively high levels of student participation in school groups. Also, the student governance groups in each of these schools seemed very active and relatively influential in school affairs as compared to the other schools.

The decisions, or issues identified as most salient were also somewhat different in small schools as compared to the largest. Some academically-oriented issues were identified in the smaller schools, while in the larger schools issues were almost exclusively concerned with either rules for student control, or student privileges. Perhaps smaller schools are simply easier to manage, require less manifest interest in rules and overt control mechanisms, and therefore allow more student interest in more academic decisions. Perhaps, also, administration in smaller schools feel "safer" to include students in the school

decision-making process. While these speculations are highly tentative, they do seem to fit the descriptive data that we have. School size might be a very pertinent variable in the study of schools' political process.

Student Groups Descriptions

While the foregoing school-level descriptions are useful as a context for this paper, we must focus attention on characteristics of groups within schools. There are considerable variations among these groups which also help to set a backdrop for other analyses in this paper.

Student roles within school groups. The two principal sources of evidence concerning student roles in groups are nominations by students in groups and researcher observations. The nominations data (in 33 of the 34 groups) were stimulated by the following question (role labels have been inserted in all capital letters; they did not appear in the original question):

> People in a group help that group in many ways. We would like you to name up to three people whom you think of as contributing in each of the ways listed below. You may use any person's name more than once, and you should leave spaces blank if you can't think of anyone, or can think of less than three people for any one list. Please give both first and last names of the people you list. You may use your own name.
>
> a. This person is a real organizer; he or she knows how to plan things so that they get done. (ORGANIZER)
>
> b. Whenever we are arguing or can't seem to get along this person says or does something that makes us laugh, or feel better. (FACILITATOR)

c. Although this person may not always get a lot of credit, he or she can be counted on to work hard doing all the little things that have to be done to make our projects succeed.
(SUPPORTER)

d. This person often feels very strongly about a particular idea and works to convince the group that it would be the best choice.
(ADVOCATE)

e. This person helps us decide by pointing out both the good and bad points of ideas or plans we are considering.
(EVALUATOR)

f. This person makes everyone feel that contributing their ideas is important to the group. He or she encourages others to share ideas.
(FACILITATOR)

Observations were carried out in 14 of the 33 groups with most of these studied being student governance groups. Researchers tallied instances of behavior in each role using the definition in Appendix A to guide this observation.

Evidence for the reliability of these data is presented as part of findings in the following section.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study largely conform to the predictions outlined earlier in the paper. Attitudes are associated with both quantity and quality of participation. The only major finding that deviated from expectation was the lack of relationship between school SES and level of participation within the school. Results of the study are discussed below.

Attitudes are Related to the Choice to Participate in Groups

Attitudes are thought to be predispositions to action--the first stage of the cycle of competence. Those students who have more positive attitudes toward school and society in general could be expected to participate in school group activities. For the sample as a whole, this is true. For each of the three years, the students were split into two groups--those who reported membership in school groups and those who did not participate. Mean attitude scores were computed for these two subcategories of students, and for each of the three years, there were distinct and significant differences for each attitude. Table 1 shows these differences.

Attitudes and participation are related for each of the three years studied. More important, perhaps, is the issue of whether attitudes and participation in previous years are related to participation in subsequent years. To test this notion, across-year correlations between attitudes and participation have been computed. The relationships across years are very modest, but there is a more or less consistent pattern among them. First, the relationships are all positive, as expected, with school attitudes of political interest and confidence and social integration being generally the strongest. These correlations between the previous or current years attitudes and current years participation range from .11 to .33 with most around .20.

Table 1--Mean attitude scores for participating vs. non-participating students over three years (within-year comparisons)

Mean Attitude Scores

	1974		1975		1976	
Attitude for each year	No Partic	Partic	No Partic	Partic	No Partic	Partic
	(N=202)	(N=545)	(N=191)	(N=560)	(N=55)	(N=258)
General pol. interest	-.36	.17	-.38	.09	-.41	.13
General social trust	-.17	.09	-.11	.09	.12	.29
General pol. confidence	-.12	.21	-.27	.18	-.09	.20
General soc. integration	-.27	.12	-.22	.17	-.16	.25
School pol. interest	-.40	.18	-.42	.21	-.32	.24
School trust in students	-.20	.11	-.28	-.03	.02	.11
School trust-sch. adults	-.29	.15	-.29	.08	.00	.21
School pol. confidence	-.34	.17	-.48	.06	-.24	.16
School soc. integration	-.35	.17	-.39	.14	-.35	.23

Second, the attitudes appear to be a bit more highly correlated with the number of groups that students choose to participate in during 1976. School political interest in 1974, 75 and 76 was correlated with the number of groups listed in 1976; the figures are .25, .21 and .24 respectively. The correlations for school political confidence are .24, .20 and .28; figures for school social integration are .33, .23 and .31. This adds support to the view that school political attitudes predispose students to active involvement within the school.

The stronger relationship between these school political attitudes and amount of participation compared to these same attitudes and simple participation (in at least one group) also strengthens this position. There are many motives for participation in school groups including the desire to be with a particular friend, interest in the group subject matter (e.g. science club) or a desire to improve one's college application. The inclusion of students who participate in one or two groups for these reasons would tend to weaken the relationship between political attitudes and participation. The fact that these relationships are stronger when a student seeks out membership in many group settings adds support to the view that activity is a political expression.

A third observation from these correlations is that, as would be expected, the attitudes toward the school as a political system tend to be more highly related to the participation variables than are the general attitudes. Path analysis of the 1974 data reported earlier found that the effects of the general political attitudes on participation were indirect, mediated by their impact on the school attitudes (Eyler, 1978, AERA paper). One expects general political predispositions to influence behavior within the school, only to the extent that the school is viewed as a political system and these attitudes are transferred to the school.

Attitudes are Related to the Type of Group in Which Students Participate

There are differences among the 33 groups examined in this study, and one of the most basic of these differences is between governance and non-governance groups. The student councils, executive, and advisory committees were combined into a governance category, and all other groups including academic and social ones were grouped into a non-governance category. This dichotomous variable was then related to the 1974 attitudes. For all attitudes, the correlations were modest, although statistically significant, given the large sample size (N=530). The correlations ranged from .07 to .24. The two highest correlations were between group type and the two political confidence attitude scales--general (.23) and school (.24) political confidence. Sense of integration in school (.17) and interest in school politics (.20) were the only other noteworthy correlations. Whether the group has a governance function, then, appears to be modestly related to students' sense of being able to influence decisions, so that those with higher political confidence are more likely to seek membership in governance groups rather than other groups.

Attitudes are Related to the Roles Students Play in Groups

School political attitudes do appear to predispose students to join activity groups within the school. This places the student in settings in which opportunities to participate in ways that will enhance the development of political skills and a more sophisticated understanding of how groups work will occur. The next issue that was addressed was the relationship between these predispositions and the roles that students choose to play within the group.

Role behavior. Evidence of student involvement in particular functional roles within each of the 33 groups was gathered by asking students to nominate peers to role categories. Students nominated two or more times by peers are considered to be role occupants. In a subset of these groups, observations of

role behavior were also made on a visit to a group meeting. There were, of course, fewer observed incidents of role behavior in one observation than in peer nomination by students who based their assessment on considerable experience with the dynamics of the group. In spite of this discrepancy, there was considerable agreement between observation and nomination data. See Table 2. Students do appear to play distinctive roles within activity groups.

Table 2--Percent of students observed in role also nominated for that role

Organizer	68%
Advocate	43%
Facilitator	62%
Evaluator	44%
Supporter	32%

Intensity of Participation. One way of looking at the role data is to use it as a surrogate for intensity of participation. Organizers and advocates demonstrate the most intense levels of activity within the group; these roles involve both time and public expressions of commitment. Observers, those not nominated for any role, are the least involved. The other roles require more moderate levels of involvement.

Figures 1 and 2 show the relationship of general and school attitude means for the high, medium, and low intensity categories of the behavior setting sample. These are expressed in Z-scores based on the mean of the entire 1974 sample; this was the only year for which we have data on the school groups.

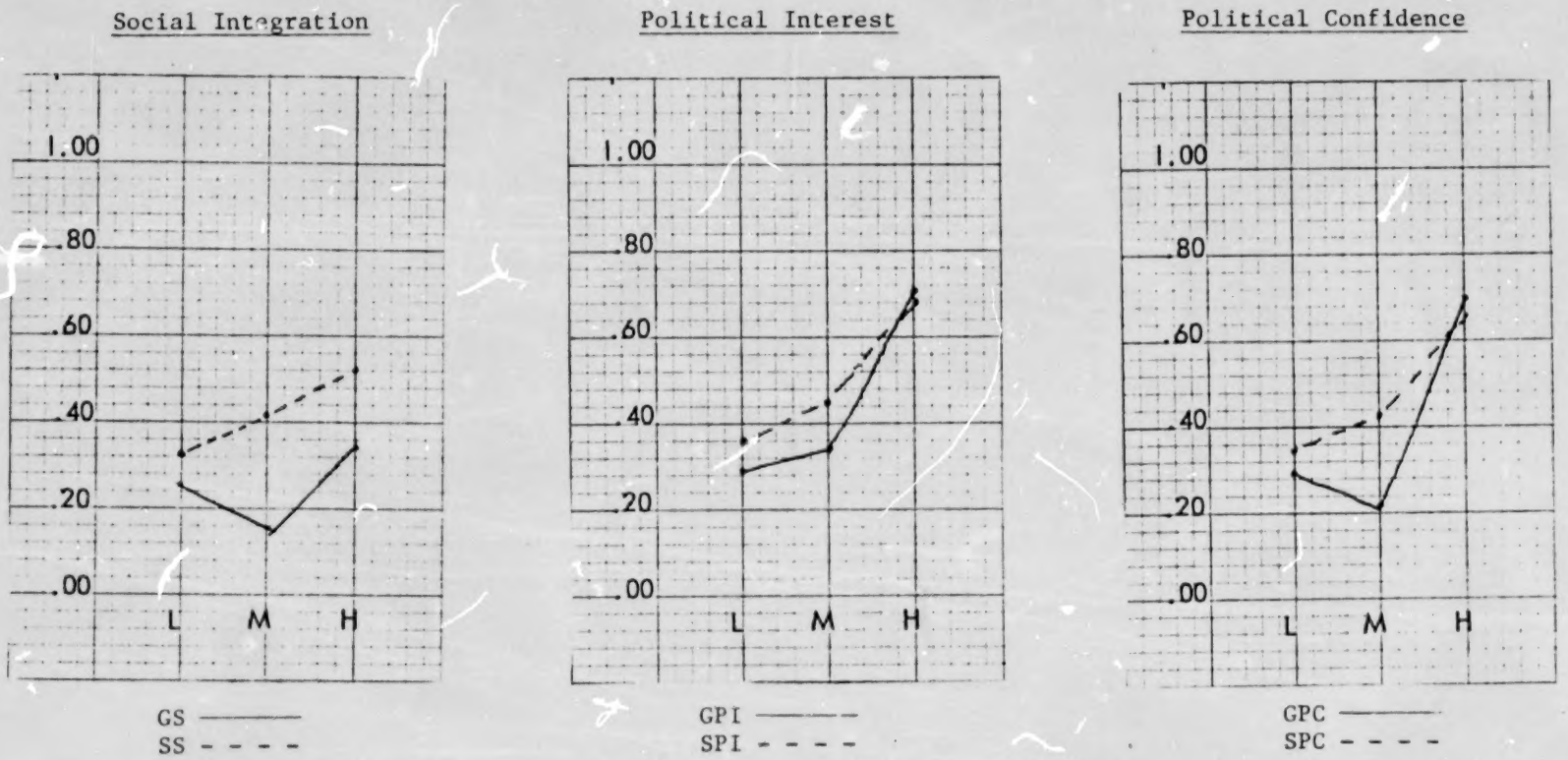
There was no clear difference between level of intensity and attitude means for the trust variables. For all variables, the school attitudes of the group participants differed from the sample mean more dramatically than did general socio-political attitudes. This is consistent with the earlier finding relating the choice to participate at all more closely to school than general attitudes. School attitudes are thus more closely related to the decision to participate, and to the degree of participation within the group, than are general attitudes.

Social integration is related to intensity of participation within the group, although not as dramatically as are the political attitudes of interest and confidence.

The pattern of relationships between political interest and political confidence suggests that these attitudes help shape the experiences students will have within groups as well as predisposing them to seek out group membership. Students who take more active group roles are substantially more interested and confident than their less active peers. (Figures 1 and 2)

These patterns are more pronounced for members of governance groups. Those who take active roles differ substantially from the less active participants, who are in turn considerably more positive in their predispositions than the sample as a whole. The monotonic relationship of school attitudes to within-group participation contrasts with the pattern noted for general socio-political attitudes where low and medium levels of participation are similar and differ dramatically from high levels.

Figure 1--Attitude Means* by Intensity of Participation - All Groups



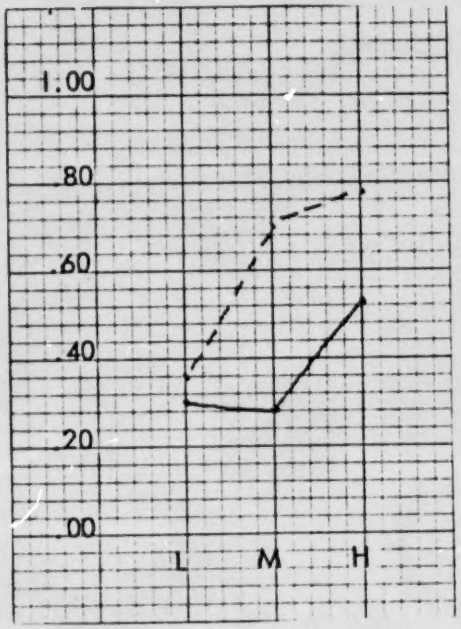
*z score means based on whole school sample 1974

L-low, M-medium, H-high -- Intensity of within group participation

GS, SS - General and School Social Integration; GPI, SPI - General and School Political Interest; GPC, SPC - General and School Political Confidence

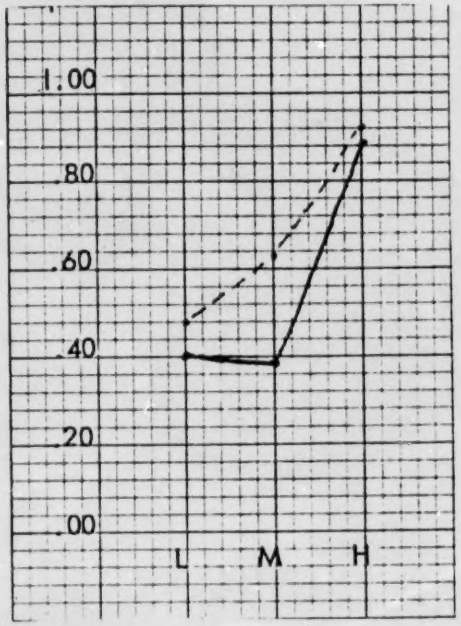
Figure 2--Attitude Means* by Intensity of Participation - Governance Groups

Social Integration



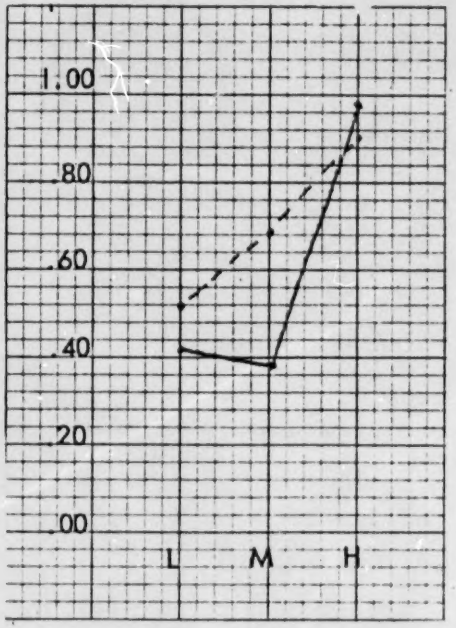
GS ———
SS - - - -

Political Interest



GPI ———
SPI - - - -

Political Confidence



GPC ———
SPC - - - -

*z score means based on whole school sample 1974

L-low, M-medium, H-high -- Intensity of within group participation

GS, SS - General and School Social Integration; GPI, SPI - General and School Political Interest; GPC, SPC - General and School Political Confidence

The more pronounced relationship of political attitudes to level of activity within the school governance groups is further support for the notion that such participation has a political character, that the school is a surrogate political arena. Political attitudes of interest and confidence are related to joining groups; are more closely related to joining governance groups such as student councils and executive advisory groups; are related to intensity of activity within groups; and more closely to level of activity within governance groups. On this last point, a separate correlational analysis using the 1975 means found significant relationships between both general and school political interest and confidence and active involvement within governance groups. Attitudinal predispositions thus affect not only entry into settings where skill building activities will occur, but also influence the nature of the participant experiences within those settings.

Attitude patterns for organizers and advocates. Students who play particular roles within a group vary, not only in the intensity of their participation, but in the tasks they perform and thus potentially in the politically useful skills they practice. Thus, attitudinal predispositions, if they are related to selection of particular group roles to perform, may further shape the direction of development of the student participant.

Some interesting differences appear in the patterns of attitudes associated with the two most intense roles--organizer and advocate. These are illustrated in Figure 3. Organizers, who are practicing skills of planning and organizing group activity, are consistently more positive than advocates on school socio-political attitudes and with one exception, less positive than advocates on general socio-political attitudes. Advocates have a much stronger ($Z = .74$) sense of belongingness to the society in general than other role occupants, as well as

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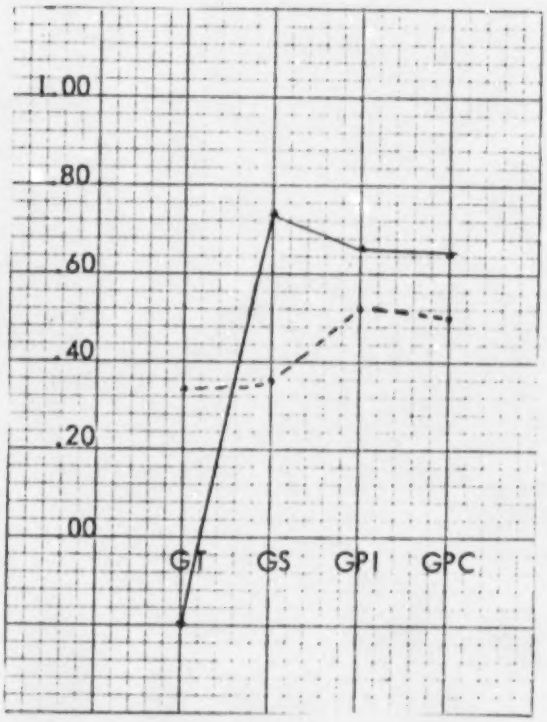
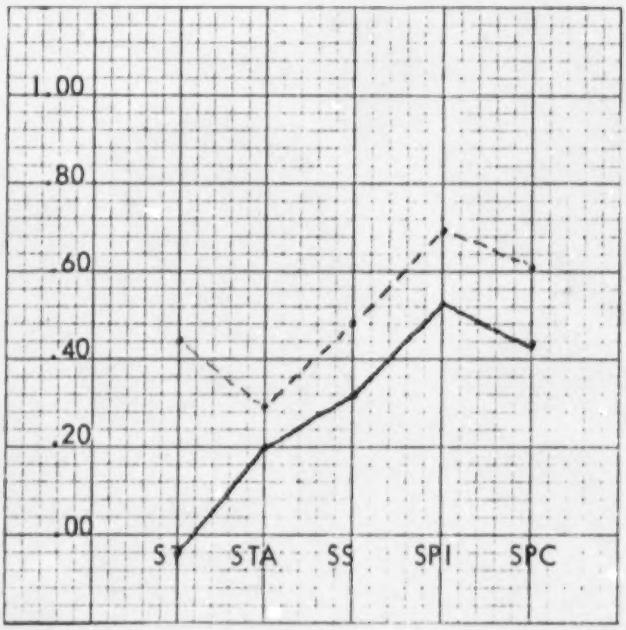
Figure 3--Attitude Means* for Organizers and Advocates

General Attitudes



School Attitudes



*z score means, based on whole school sample 1974

——— advocates (nominated 2 or more times - not as organizer)

- - - organizers (nominated 2 or more times - not as advocate)

Attitude Symbols ST-School Trust; STA-School Trust Adults; SS-School Social Integration; SPI-School Political Interest; SPC-School Political Confidence; GT-General Trust; GS-General Social Integration; GPI-General Political Interest; GPC-General Political Confidence

stronger sense of political interest and confidence (Zs of .65, .66). They are less positive than organizers and supporters in their school attitudes--although considerably above the mean for the entire sample. One dramatic departure from organizer, in fact, from all other roles, is in the area of trust. Advocates have lower levels of general (Z = -.22) and school trust (trust in other students Z = -.08).

This configuration, for the advocate, of low trust and high political interest, political confidence, and sense of integration with the larger society, is similar to a number of findings in the literature related to student activism. Kenniston, for example, found that activists were low in trust and high in their commitment to bringing about social change (Kenniston, 1968). Milbrath and Goel (1977) cite a number of studies that associate both conventional and unconventional forms of political activism with the combination of mistrust and strong political interest and confidence.

It may be that students recognized by their peers as strong advocates of particular points of view, who are not also nominated as organizers or group leaders, may share the characteristics of the activists identified in these other studies. This is additional evidence to support the view that role differences which entail the practice of different political skills exist and that students are predisposed by their pattern of socio-political attitudes to particular types of within-group experience.

Holding school offices. In addition to peer nomination and observation data on leadership roles, we also asked students in the 1976 questionnaire to list schoolwide or group offices that they had held during high school. All general and school attitudes for 1974, 75 and 76 were significantly correlated with office holding reported in 1976, with school political attitudes of interest, confidence and social integration showing the strongest relationships.

See Table 3. This supports the role findings which suggest that attitudes shape the quality of within group experiences as well as the simple entry into participation settings.

Table 3--Correlation of attitudes with number of offices held

	Number of offices reported in 1976		
	74 attitudes / 76 offices	75 attitudes / 76 offices	76 attitudes / 76 offices
Sch. pol. interest	.31	.27	.26
Sch. trust students	.19	.18	.14
Sch. trust in adults	.23	.23	.16
Sch. pol. conf.	.32	.29	.32
Sch. soc. integration	.38	.30	.33

Office holding was also related, as would be expected, to whether the student had participated in school groups all three years. For those who had done so, 62% reported holding an office, whereas only 32% of participants for two years had the opportunity to participate in this type of leadership role, and none of those who participated for only one year reported having done so. Both continuity and amount of participation, both associated with socio-political attitudes, will enhance the likelihood of the students occupying a formal leadership role during the high school years.

Activity Groups Differ in Selected Political Characteristics

Up to this point, we have identified some ways in which the experiences students have are shaped by their attitudinal predispositions; their participation, amount of participation, choice of type of group, activity level within

the group, group role, and service in a leadership position are all related to attitude variables. The students' experience will also be shaped by characteristics of the groups themselves which are independent of their own attitudes.

Concentration of leadership. There is considerable variation across the groups in measures of diffusion or concentration of leadership, if we consider the percentage of students nominated at least once for the organizer role as an index of concentration. The range of nominations across all 33 groups was from 21% to 62%. This pattern was not related to group type (governance vs. non-governance) but was associated with group size; smaller groups were more diffuse. The group that a student enters may offer considerably different opportunities to practice skills of group leadership than some other activity group.

Concentration of participation. There were two ways to assess participation. The percentage of students nominated as supporters--those who carry out group tasks--varied from 21% to 83%, suggesting wide variation in participation in group activities among groups. Group size was also a factor; as was noted in Barker and Gump's work (1964), smaller groups have more difficulty filling task roles and offer more opportunities and encouragement for active membership.

Students were also asked to characterize participation in their group--by a few; the majority; almost all members. In all but four of the 33 groups, 50% or more of group members were in agreement. In 12 groups, a few of the members were viewed as doing most of the work; in six the majority participate; in 11 nearly everyone participates.

The assessment of group participation was not related to student attitudes; this, coupled with the agreement among group participants, suggests that the climate of participation offered by a particular group may differ a good deal

from that offered by another group. The likelihood that students will actively practice skills of group participation as well as group leadership will differ depending on the group they join.

Group decision rule. Students were also asked to characterize the way in which decisions were made within the group. As in group participation, the students' perception of the group decision process was independent of their own attitudinal predisposition and there was substantial agreement within each group, although there were more groups in which participants disagreed, than there were with participation (nine as compared to four). Seven groups were characterized as having decisions made by a few members of the group; seven indicated a majority rule process; and nine indicated a consensual decision-making process. The strategies necessary to influence decisions following each of these rules are somewhat different and participation in these varying processes might be expected to have a differential impact on students' political learning.

Relationship of participation to decision-rule. As might be expected, the student description of degree of participation is significantly related to the type of decision rule the group practices. The groups reported to have a low percentage of participation were also more likely to have control of decisions in the hands of a few group members; the reverse was true for groups with more diffuse participation. The consistency of these findings adds support to the view that groups offer differing kinds of political experience to their participants quite apart from the predispositions that may have led students to initial involvement. The relationship between group participants and group decision-rule are shown in Table 4.

Table 4--Relationship of group participation to group decision rule

			Group Decision Rule				
			One person	Few	Majority	Everyone	n
Group Participation	Few	1	9%	41%	35%	15%	175
	Majority	2	6	21	42	31	146
	Almost all	3	6	17	37	40	120
		N	31	124	167	119	441

Relationship of Participation to Students' Understanding of the School Political Environment

Attitudes appear to shape student participation experiences both in quantity and quality; there is less evidence available to link these experiences with political understanding or skill. While data were not explicitly gathered to test the impact of participation, there is some limited evidence from the 1974 systems questionnaire that suggests that students who participate differ somewhat in their awareness of the school political arena; their perceptions of how the decision-making process works; and their sense of how the process should work.

Decision awareness. Students were asked to list important decisions that influenced nearly everyone in the school. Students who participate listed significantly more decisions on average than did non-participants. They were more aware of the political processes of their school and hence more likely to increase their understanding of how decisions are influenced. They were also significantly more likely to feel that students do influence school rules.

Perceptions of School Political Processes. Participants had a more complex view of how administrators, teachers, and students exercise influence than did non-participants. While non-participants considered position to be the key resource in the influence of administrators and teachers, participants were significantly more likely to add personality to the pool of resources. Participants were also significantly more likely to view the political skillfulness of

of students as a resource in influencing school decision-making. They were also significantly more likely to view influence as a reciprocal process, rather than as largely a one-way flow from adult authority figures in the school. Participants appear more aware of the informal elements of the political process. These differences suggest a more complex and sophisticated understanding of how the political decision-making process works which may result from their observation of and participation in that process.

Optimal Decision Rule and Leadership Style. Both participants and non-participants split their votes between majority rule and consensus when asked for the ideal school decision rule, but participants were significantly more likely to opt for majority rule as the ideal policy; those who were not participants were more likely to favor use of consensus. Participation may lead to a more pragmatic view of how the political process should work.

Both participants and non-participants tended to support the view that leaders should influence their followers by effective and rational persuasion but a significant minority of non-participants (20%) supported an autocratic leadership style.

Effects of School S.E.S. and Size on Attitudes and Participation

Two school-level characteristics which might influence the attitudes and participation behavior of students are socio-economic status and size of schools. In order to examine this possibility, each school-level variable was related to the student attitudes and behaviors. In the case of S.E.S., individual student data were not collected. This would have been desirable, of course, but the researchers were actually turned out of one school during the second year when collecting such data from students was suggested to school officials. But prior to student data collection, principals were asked to characterize the socio-economic status levels in the school. Their responses were corroborated by

school visits, and the schools were split into two groups, the first being those whose students had parents predominantly from working class and lower middle class occupations, while the second group of schools reflected parents in predominantly professional and other upper middle class occupations. School size was dichotomized, so that small schools ranged in size from 325 to 1,100 students, and large schools from 1,500 to 2,500 students.

School socio-economic status. The differences in mean attitude and group participation scores for low and high S.E.S. schools are rather small, and there is no clear pattern among them. Both low and high S.E.S. schools are slightly higher on some attitudes and lower on others. Given the lack of any clear pattern of differences, it must be concluded that there is no systematic influence of school S.E.S. on attitudes.

There is no difference on the student within group participation variable, either, for any of the three years. However, the lower S.E.S. schools do appear to have students who report belonging to more school groups, and holding more offices in school groups, than the higher S.E.S. schools.

Given no clear direct relationship between school S.E.S. and student attitude/participation variables, we turn to the question of whether school S.E.S. might moderate the across-years correlations between attitudes and participation which were studied above. The many pairs of correlations, one each for low and high S.E.S. schools, yielded no consistent patterns of differences. In fact, the comparisons favoring high S.E.S. schools were about cancelled by those favoring low S.E.S. schools. It must be concluded, therefore, that not only is there no systematic direct relationship between school S.E.S. and student attitudes and group participation, but school S.E.S. also does not moderate relationships between student attitude and participation variables.

School size. The same two analyses reported above for school S.E.S. were carried while controlling for school size instead. For 1974, students from

small schools had more positive attitudes, but this clear difference did not hold up for 1975 or 1976, when the comparisons are mixed. The smaller schools do have students who report higher within-group participation levels, more group memberships, and more offices held, however.

When the possible moderating effects of school size on across-year attitude-participation correlations was examined, there were no systematic differences between the correlations examined. The relationships tend to hold in small schools just as they do in large schools.

This analysis shows, therefore, that there are few clear effects for school S.E.S. or size. For 1974 attitudes, students in small schools tend to have more positive attitudes, and the small schools also have higher rates of group membership, within-group participation, and number of offices held.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study yielded a consistent pattern of findings which conformed largely to predictions. The first stage of political competence, the basic core of attitudes such as trust, social integration, political interest and political confidence, do appear to predispose students to enter into voluntary group activities in the high school. Attitudes are related to the simple fact of participation as compared to non-participation in each of the 3 years of the study and year's attitudes predict participation in subsequent years. These attitudes are related not only to simple participation, but also to the number of groups that students indicate they have participated in. Data on number of groups were collected in 1976; attitudes measured in 1974 and 75 as well as 76 are associated with it. School attitudes were consistently more closely associated with participation within the high school than were the parallel general attitudes; for these attitudes to influence participation in the high school as a political arena, they must first be transferred to the school.

In addition to participation, attitudes, particularly the more explicitly political attitudes of political interest and confidence, are associated with the level of activity within these governance groups.

The attitudes that predispose students to seek out arenas in which to participate, also shape the kinds of activities they undertake within these groups. Attitudes of social integration, political interest and political confidence are all related to the intensity of participation; more positive students take the most active roles within groups.

An interesting pattern of attitudes was noted for the two most active occupants of the two most active functional roles within groups. Organizers, who plan and direct group activity, were more positive in their school attitudes than are advocates, who are noted for their championing of particular points of view. Advocates are comparatively more positive in their attitudes towards the wider political system, with one exception. They are dramatically less trusting than occupants of all other role categories; their average trust is, in fact, lower than the entire sample mean for 1974 when role data were collected. This whole sample includes a substantial percentage of non-participants who tend to have much lower attitudes than participants. This pattern for the advocate is consistent with the literature on social activism and adds further support to the view that attitude predispositions will shape the character of the experiences that students have within the school political arena.

The relationship of attitudes to another measure of leadership activity, the holding of school offices, was also consistent with other findings presented here. Attitudes in all three years were associated with the number of offices that students listed in 1976; social integration, political interest and political confidence, again bore the closest relationship to intense political activity.

In addition to the impact of attitudinal predisposition on the quality of student political experience in the school, it was also assumed that the groups

might differ in the political environment they provide. This proved to be the case. There were distinct differences in patterns of leadership, diffuseness of participation and the type of decision rule practiced in different groups. Student opportunities for political learning will be shaped by the idiosyncracies of particular groups in which they participate.

While the focus of the study was not on the impact on political learning of the varying types of political experience observed in the sample, there was limited evidence that might be construed to suggest that participants are somewhat more aware of the political processes of their school, that participants have a more complex understanding of the informal influence processes that operate in a political system, and that they have a more pragmatic view of how the political process might best work, when compared to non-participants.

It had been anticipated that schools attended by students who are from lower and lower middle class homes might have a lower degree of participation than those with students from higher S.E.S. backgrounds. This did not prove to be the case; in fact the slight trend in this small sample was in the direction of more participation and office holding in the lower S.E.S. schools. As expected, S.E.S. of the school did not affect the relationship between attitudes and participation within those schools. School size did have some effect on participation; smaller schools had somewhat greater participation. Again, the relationships among variables were not affected by this factor.

The major thrust of the study has been confirmed. Attitudes which presumably are well developed by high school are, in fact, associated with participation behavior both quantitatively and qualitatively within the political arena of the high school. This has implications for further research and school practice.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND FURTHER RESEARCH

By using political attitudes to predict participation behavior rather than as outcomes of school experience, this analysis suggests a way to bridge a major gap in political socialization theory. General or non-issue specific political attitudes are well established before high school; these same attitudes are associated with adult political behavior. Since it is apparently not an important molder of political attitudes, the place of the high school in furthering political competence has been in doubt.

By establishing the high school as a political arena where these attitudes are expressed in participation behaviors, this model suggests that the primary contribution of the high school to the development of political competence may lie in the effects of this participation. Specifically participation within the school political arena in varied group settings, in leadership and participant roles, and in school decision making processes is expected to contribute to the development of the behavioral component of political competence, political skill.

A second effect of this participation may be to contribute to the maintenance of the positive political attitudes developed prior to high school. The fact that political attitudes associated with adult political behavior generally are well established by the eighth grade does not guarantee that they will remain stable throughout adolescence and adulthood. Recent research has traced a steady decline in such attitudes as trust in government institutions and political self-confidence in the American electorate over the past decade. (Miller, 1974) If the development of political competence is a cyclic process as M. Brewster Smith suggested, then one would expect experiences which build political skills to sustain the students' initial political confidence and interest, perhaps offsetting some of the forces acting to undercut these positive

political attitudes often assumed to be important for maintenance of the political system.

The findings suggest further lines of research and theory development. The strong relationship between general political and school political attitudes lends credibility to the view that the school is a surrogate political system. This suggests that further theoretical development and empirical investigation of school experience from a political science perspective will be fruitful. Greater attention should be devoted to describing the school as a political system.

More adequate descriptions of schools and settings within schools are necessary if the effects of participation on the development of political competence in students are to be identified. Also critical to ascertaining the impact of the schooling experience is adequate identification and measurement of appropriate outcome variables. Since development of participation skills, rather than political attitudes, appears to be a productive focus for research during the high school years, greater attention must be paid to identifying and measuring the decision making, leadership and participation skills that are desired outcomes of political education.

More adequate description of the political characteristics of schools and identification of appropriate socio-political skills will allow a number of questions suggested by this research to be answered. It will be possible to learn whether political skillfulness does in fact increase during the high school years, or if it, like political attitudes, develops at an earlier age. It will be possible to determine what types of school experience, if any, contribute to the development of this skill component of political competence. It will be possible to find out if political behaviors expressed in a particular school context, transfer to other settings, or are related to effective adult political behavior.

Better description and measurement of school political experience and political skills will also facilitate exploration of possible effects of participation on attitude development. Although this research is based on the assumption that attitudes lead to participation in skill enhancing activities, there are two ways in which the reverse effect might be anticipated. As previously noted, the development of political competence is a cyclic process. With adequate measures of political skill it will be possible to determine if increased skillfulness from participation experience does have the effect of maintaining or increasing positive attitudes towards the political system. It is also possible that the negative cycle can be interrupted; participation experiences which increase skillfulness may have a remedial effect on political attitudes for those students who enter school with comparatively negative attitudes towards the political system and themselves as citizens. Evidence consistent with this view has been developed in studies of these attitudes in an alternative school setting. (Metzger & Barr, 1978)

IMPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL FOR SCHOOL PRACTICE

The recognition that political attitudes are predictors of participation in the political arena of the high school makes clear that high school is a relatively late influence in the cycle of development of political competence. The voluntary nature of school activities in the typical American comprehensive high school, coupled with the fact that student propensities to participate are probably formed prior to high school means that the high school will not have a monolithic influence. The richness of the political environment for any particular student is dependent on that student's decision to become involved in available settings. For students who do not choose to involve themselves, the

high school may be irrelevant as a factor in their political development. Even students who choose to engage in school activities may elect to participate in ways that add relatively little to their political competence. In some schools there may be relatively few opportunities for participation in roles or settings that will facilitate the development of political skillfulness. The influence of the high school political arena is thus likely to be rather haphazard.

If one wishes to increase student political competence, one cannot rely on the political arena provided by voluntary group activity. This approach assures that the competent will become more so and students already deficient in political skills will remain deficient. If political skillfulness is a desired goal, then systematic attempts to achieve this goal must be made.

One way to intervene in the cycle of development is through the curriculum. Both information useful for a sophisticated understanding of political participation and training in actual participation skills can be provided through instruction. Although much secondary civics instruction continues to be bland, misleading and redundant (APSA, 1971), there is evidence in Litt's study of the impact of text materials on the socialization of adolescents that the curriculum can make a difference. He found that students using text material which portrayed the group nature of political influence and the conflict inherent in the political process had a more adequate view of politics, than students who were exposed to materials stressing loyalty and individual citizen efficacy. (Litt, 1963) Adolescense is an appropriate period for the study of political conflict and effective strategies of political influence, as well as political skills; students are likely to have the cognitive capacity to master these complex concepts and the interest necessary for effective instruction. (Riccards, 1973) Efforts can also be made to teach the group process skills necessary for personal political effectiveness. The classroom offers maximum opportunities to manipulate student experiences; each student can be assured of the chance to participate in a variety of leadership and participation roles.

The natural political environment of the school can also be utilized in a more systematic way than is provided through voluntary activities. Study of the political system of the school can serve as an initial link between classroom learning and political practice. The hidden curriculum can become part of the formal political education curriculum.

School governance can also be organized to encourage more, and more varied, participation by students. There are a number of examples of such attempts to involve students in school governance in both alternative schools and public high schools. The impact of these experiences on political competence remains to be studied.

Attempts to involve students in participation experiences within the wider political community is a natural continuation of this effort to link classroom learning with political activity.

The focus on designing strategies for development of political participation skills during the high school years seems appropriate in light of the early development of the attitude component of political competence, and its effect on channeling students into potentially skill building activities. Before effective programs to achieve this end can be created, a good deal more theoretical and empirical work remains to be done. As the political system of the school is more adequately described, and as more is learned about the kinds of school experiences that contribute to political competence, systematic attempts to organize school decision making to involve all students in such experiences may be made.

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APPENDIX A

ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

ORGANIZER - The key is verbal or obvious non-verbal behavior directing others, behavior to be coded would include calling meetings to order and directing proceedings, assigning tasks, defining purpose of meeting, relating tasks of the group to larger system or other groups, relaying directions from outside the group (e.g. principal's requests to department, school board ruling to the faculty, decisions of the faculty to student council). Individuals who take responsibility for committees or other task sub-groups are also organizing (code committee report giver as organizer). Although organizer behavior will frequently be associated with formal leaders, this is not necessarily the case. An advocate of a particular position may, for example, organize others to advance the position. When he or she is planning and directing the activity of others, the person is an organizer.

ADVOCATE - The key is strong association with a particular position, alternative or candidate. To be coded advocate (as opposed to supporter) the individual must actively promote the alternative in a sustained manner (e.g. articulate presentation of position, attempts to convince others of position, clear identification with position) and show enthusiasm for position. The person who originally advances an alternative is likely to be an advocate. Alternative suggestion that is casual, or which includes a number of alternatives and possibilities is not advocacy even if it is the initial introduction of the idea. (code facilitator)

FACILITATOR - The primary behavior of the facilitator is that which makes the group move more smoothly. This includes reducing tension, helping include everyone in group decisions, and promoting compromise. Behavior that bears on tension in the group might include, jokes or remarks which reduce conflict, cheerleader behavior which promotes enthusiasm for the group or its task, or suggestions that pull the group away from personal conflict and back to the task at hand. Behavior designed to enhance the flow of ideas tends to be low key and supportive, where an organizer might ask each member to state his or her position, the facilitator is more likely to say 'I'd like to hear some more ideas,' 'Jeff, you had an idea on this, tell the group what you think,' or 'Joan, what do you think?' The facilitator may also suggest a series of unmentioned alternatives and may summarize previous contributions and try to suggest a compromise or a way to combine alternatives to meet with maximum approval. This role may be played by the organizer in some groups.

EVALUATOR - Key to this category is the articulation of a standard for judgment and comparison of alternatives with this standard. One would expect to find evaluators systematically identifying pros and cons of each alternative with regard to the goals at hand. Someone who leads the group in such an analysis would also be coded evaluator, i.e. the one who forces this decision-making perspective on the group.

SUPPORTER - Key is carrying out the initiatives of others. Support behaviors may be verbal, e.g. speaking in agreement with a position, providing information either spontaneously or as a result of assigned research and volunteering for assignments, or physical, e.g. working on committees, agreeing to carry out individual tasks, appearing in mass demonstrations such as pep rallys, marching in the band, playing on the team, decorating the dance, etc.

OBSERVER - The observer is a member of a group who does nothing except attend meetings, vote, and perhaps provide some very minimal degree of verbal support. Anyone who appears minimally attentive and does not make any larger contributions to the group is an observer.